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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7080
INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1345
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY 5684
RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY 6637
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY 8935
RUEHJA/AMCONSUL SURABAYA PRIORITY 1183

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OTRA](#) [AMGT](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: THAILAND COUNTRY CLEARANCE FOR EAP A/S HILL AND
SPECIAL ASSISTANT GIBBONS

REF: STATE 68693

¶1. Post warmly welcomes and grants country clearance to EAP A/S Hill and Special Assistant Gibbons for their May 22-23 visit and their May 25-26 transit.

¶2. We have made arranged accommodations at the EMR guest house for the night of May 22. The phone number at the EMR guest house is (66)(2) 205-5404. For the night of May 25, hotel reservations have been made at the Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport Hotel (confirmation numbers 408606 and 408607), with address and contact information as follows:

999 Suvarnabhumi Airport Hotel
Moo 1 Mongprue Bang Phil
Samutprakam, Bangkok
Tel: 66-2-131-1111
Fax: 66-2-131-1188

The room rate is 4,888 Baht net (taxes and American breakfast included) and within per diem. (Currently, the Baht is around 34.50 to the USD.) An express breakfast at the Square Restaurant is available from 0300 hrs.

¶3. Control officer for the visit is Deputy Political Counselor David R. Greenberg, who can be reached as follows:

Work phone: (66-2) 205-4816
Cell phone: (66-81) 920-1084
Home phone: (66-2) 254-1589
Fax: (66-2) 253-3876
Unclassified e-mail address: Greenbergdr@state.gov

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The after-hours emergency number for the Embassy (Post One) is (66-2) 205-4108.

¶4. The control officer and an Embassy expediter will meet A/S Hill and Special Assistant Gibbons at the airport on arrival.

¶5. Although visas are not required of holders of U.S. passports (whether diplomatic, official or tourist) who plan to stay fewer than 30 days, post nonetheless recommends that TDY travelers obtain an official visa before coming to Thailand.

¶6. SECURITY INFORMATION

¶A. CRIME:

-- Crime is generally non-confrontational in nature. Criminal acts are usually crimes of opportunity such as purse-snatchings, thefts of unattended property, and pick pocketing. Visitors should be especially alert in crowded buses, streets, and markets or while on "tuk-tuks." Visitors should lock valuables in hotel safe deposit boxes not in their hotel rooms.

-- Be aware of common scams and frauds (including credit cards, in particular). Visitors should only use credit cards at well-established and reputable businesses. Visitors should be careful when purchasing branded or copyrighted goods. There are many pirated counterfeit products in the marketplace; their purchase is against post regulations and it is illegal to import these products into the U.S. Be wary of common scams for jewelry, suits, silks, gems, or antiquities. There are no Thai government-owned or sponsored gem stores. If victimized, seek assistance from Tourist Police by dialing 1155.

-- Visitors are cautioned from visiting bars involved in the sex trade. Many of these operate illegally and clients can be subject to RTG law; they often charge exorbitant drink prices and cover charges. There are also many incidents of crime against patrons in these establishments. Drugging and robbing of unwary individuals is not uncommon. There are sporadic reports of victims being drugged and robbed or beaten when visiting these bars. The drugs used can cause serious temporary memory impairment, unconsciousness, and if overdosed, death.

B. TRAFFIC:

-- The traffic situation in Bangkok can be difficult and dangerous for both pedestrians and vehicle occupants. All

visitors should be alert to traffic patterns and unexpected motorcycle drivers. Traffic drives on the left-hand side, opposite from the U.S., although there may be a bus lane that flows in the opposite direction. Pedestrians should use the overhead walkways for crossing busy streets.

C. TERRORISM:

-- The threat from transnational terrorist groups to the U.S. Mission in Bangkok is currently ranked medium. Despite stepped up RTG efforts to monitor its borders, they remain relatively porous and allow easy illegal access. Transnational terrorist groups, including Al-Qa'ida and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), have utilized Thailand as a transit point.

-- The threat from indigenous terrorist groups is currently rated as low. There is no evidence to indicate that indigenous terrorist groups are planning acts against U.S. personnel or facilities. The far south of Thailand has experienced incidents of criminally and politically motivated violence, including incidents attributed to armed local Muslim separatist groups. Although Americans have not been specifically targeted in the past, the indiscriminate nature of past attacks by these groups -- including bombings of public places -- indicates a potential threat to American citizens.

-- The State Department is concerned that there is an increased risk of terrorism in Southeast Asia, including Thailand. Travelers to Thailand should therefore exercise caution, especially in locations where Westerners congregate, such as clubs, discos, bars, restaurants, hotels, tourist areas, and other places frequented by foreigners.

D. OTHER SECURITY TIPS:

-- Visitors should avoid making any pejorative comments about any members of the Thai Royal Family or engaging in disrespectful conduct within temples or toward religious objects. Such behavior can result in arrest and/or expulsion from Thailand.

-- Precautions should also be taken not to discuss sensitive or classified matters outside secure environments or over unsecured and/or cellular telephones, and to securely safeguard classified or sensitive materials at the Chancery and not at hotels or residences.

-- Visitors should also review the State Department,s Consular Information Sheet for Thailand and the most recent Worldwide Caution Public Announcements, which are available via the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>.

-- In essence, visitors to Bangkok must exercise appropriate caution and be alert to their surroundings with regard to their personal security. Suspicious incidents/activities should be reported to RSO Bangkok (tel. 02-205-4000, 24 hrs/day). On behalf of US Embassy Bangkok, we hope you have a safe and pleasant visit.
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